Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims set forth below replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A method for detecting microorganisms, comprising the steps of:

(a) ~~exposing~~ collecting microorganisms on a collection device bearing a dry growth medium by placement of the collection device on a surface for exposure to ambient air for a predetermined period of time;

(b) adding a premeasured volume of activating liquid to the dry growth medium after completion of the exposure step; and

(c) allowing any collected microorganisms to grow into colonies.

Claim 2 (Canceled)

Claim 3 (Previously amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the method further comprises after step (b) and before step (c) the step of spreading the activating liquid over a predefined area of the medium with a hand press by placing the hand press over the liquid on the medium and applying sufficient pressure to spread the liquid over the predefined area of the medium.

Claim 4 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the device comprises a substrate having an upper surface and a layer of a dry growth medium disposed on the upper surface of the substrate.

Claim 5 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the device comprises a self-supporting, water-proof substrate having an upper surface, a layer of adhesive coated on the upper surface of the substrate, the adhesive being non-inhibitory to the growth of microorganisms, and cold-water-soluble powder adhered uniformly to the adhesive, the powder comprising one or more nutrients for growing microorganisms, and optionally a gelling agent.

Claim 6 (Original): The method of claim 4 wherein the device further comprises a cover sheet releasably adhered to at least a portion of the substrate the cover sheet being opened in step (a) to expose the dry growth medium to ambient air and closed in step (c) to allow collected microorganisms to grow.

Claim 7 (Original): The method of claim 4 wherein the adhesive layer is translucent to allow the colonies to be visually inspected.

Claim 8 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said device comprises: a self-supporting, water-proof substrate having an upper surface; an air-permeable membrane having its peripheral edge(s) substantially uncovered, and having a top surface and a bottom

surface, the bottom surface being fixed to and covering at least a portion of the upper surface of the substrate; and

a dry growth medium fixed to and covering at least a portion of the top surface of the membrane comprising one or more nutrients for growing microorganisms, and optionally a gelling agent.

Claim 9 (Previously amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the method further comprises an additional step between steps (b) and (c) of placing the device in an incubator.

Claim 10 (Previously amended): The method of claim 4 wherein the powder comprises a gelling agent in an amount sufficient to form a gel having a Brookfield viscosity of at least 1500 cps when hydrated with the premeasured volume of water.

Claim 11 (Previously amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the method further comprises an additional step after step (c) of counting the colonies.

Claims 12-18 (Withdrawn)